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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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July 28, 2020

Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20004

Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell:

Our U.S. Service Academies are the bedrock strength of our military. They take great care to train and develop the best and brightest among us, who courageously devote their lives to serving their country. The responsibility to prepare these young leaders brings with it a great deal of support from service members, members of congress and beyond. But that does not shield service academies from the responsibility to create welcoming and inclusive cultures for underrepresented groups, particularly Black Americans.

That is why many of us were disturbed by the accounts of former United States Military Academy Cadets detailed in the Washington Post article “A racial reckoning arrived at West Point, where being black is a ‘beautifully painful experience’.” To hear the stories of young Black men and women who were forced to choose between a prestigious education and their personal identity was deeply troubling. Unfortunately, these stories represent the experiences of so many people of color who attend our Service Academies. We as leaders must set a better example if we hope to truly develop leaders of character and build up generations that will one day lead this country.

These brave young men and women have spoken and called upon us to act. It is because of that moral mandate that we urge you to support and incorporate our commonsense additions to the National Defense Reauthorization Act (NDAA) legislation to address many of the concerns surrounding service academies. We are promoting necessary changes to ensure that confederate honors have no place within our service academies, to prohibit financially discriminatory policies and allow for fairer disciplinary action, but also to build out a comprehensive mentoring and career development program to give our cadets and midshipmen an equitable shot at long-term success. We also believe that giving greater attention to increasing women and minorities in our military service goal setting, alongside conducting a thorough review of campus culture will

leave lasting impacts not just on the diversity of our service academies, but our entire military. If we take these small steps in the right direction it will foster more productive, diverse, and cohesive classes of service academy graduates year after year, those of who will go on to serve our nation heroically.

Too often, we fail to listen to the youth in our country calling for change. We should not make that mistake now. As you negotiate the conference agreement for the National Defense Authorization Act we urge you to stand up for our service members and stand up for what is right. It is our belief that the proposals included in the House-passed bill can begin to turn the tide toward a more inclusive and socially conscious military. We urge you to support these proposals and thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sean Maloney', with a stylized, overlapping loop structure.

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress